



Hope Floats: Hackel Wants Waterfront Casino For Macomb

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Reporting Roberta Jasina - WWJ Newsradio 950

MACOMB COUNTY (WWJ) - Want to go camping in Macomb County? Sorry, there is no campground. How about staying in a luxury hotel on the beach of Lake St. Clair? It doesn't exist.

Canoeing on the Clinton River? Limited access. Lots of debris. Swimming at local beaches? Yuck.

But all of that could change if Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel has his way.

Hackel tells WWJ's Roberta Jasina in an exclusive interview that it's time to roll the dice (literally) to jumpstart economic development. Hackel says he envisions a brand new, privately owned marina-casino on Lake St. Clair.

"Can you imagine the opportunities for something like that? We would blow everything else out of the water."

Hackel says he is now asking the locals "Who wants that opportunity?" He says: "Can you imagine the summertime events that could be put on by having a marina casino? It would truly transform that lakefront."

He says he'd like part of the money generated by a casino to be used for cleaning up Lake St. Clair.

Hackel also says he's mystified by the fact that there is not one hotel along the entire lakefront in Macomb County.

"Why is that?" he asks. "That is the busiest freshwater lake in the entire country during the summer months, and we don't even have one hotel. It doesn't make sense."

Hackel says his administration is also working now to get grant money to remove tons of woody debris from the Clinton River (which he calls Macomb County's Main Stream/Main Street).

He envisions privately owned canoe liveries popping up, along with riverfront campgrounds. (Macomb County is the only county in the state of Michigan without a public campground.)

Some local residents don't like the casino idea.

One man who spoke with WWJ's Roberta Jasina along North River Road (he wanted to remain anonymous) says he is against any Macomb County casino. Period.

"The only reason they'd open a casino is for the money. I'm not a gambler, so I don't need one."

Joe Ramsey of Sterling Heights agrees. "No, we don't need any casinos. People who go to casinos have a problem losing money. That's a bad idea."

Other county residents congratulate Hackel. Enthusiastically.

"If there's a casino, they'll come," says Mike Sopha. "I think it'd be a great idea that would bring a lot of money to Macomb County."

Another resident, Tracy Peltier says "I've lived here for 40 years. We need something on this waterfront. Get rid of this rubbish. It'd be great."

"A casino would be nice," adds Lawrence Vaughter.

A group of "20-somethings" were also eager to jump on Hackel's casino bandwagon.

K.B. Brasure says "I think it would bring a lot of business in, and I think a lot of people would go. For sure."

Her (anonymous) friend tells WWJ, "It would make Macomb more fun, more happening."

Dylan Rhodes says, "I think it's a great idea. Good for business."

- Roberta Jasina